

almost missed the Marquis de Lafayette's speech. Clay and the other House Members did not tell them it was happening until the very last minute, and relations between the two Chambers have not been the same since.

But America's friendship with France has endured. As French President Charles de Gaulle put it in his own 1960 address before a joint session of Congress:

Our common past is filled with efforts and sacrifices. [And] it is great because at all times we have served together for freedom.

Similar to Henry Clay, I consider it an honor today to welcome another great Frenchman to the American Capitol. When French President Nicolas Sarkozy addressed the Congress this morning, he stood beside a painting of the Marquis de Lafayette. Similar to that great Frenchman, President Sarkozy sees much to admire in America. He spoke eloquently about that admiration today. I think there is an important lesson in his words and in his election for the 110th Congress.

President Sarkozy admires America's openness to new ideas and to new people. He admires our work ethic, and he has already begun to implement policies that will make hard work pay in France. In an effort to lure back the so-called fiscal exiles who have left Paris for London or Geneva, he has cut the top tax rate from 60 percent to 50 percent.

He plans to replace two-thirds of retiring Government workers to shrink the size of Government, and to end the right of some Government workers to retire at age 50 with a pension. He is starting to take away the tools French labor unions routinely use to cripple France. To encourage work, he has significantly cut taxes on overtime work.

A lot of people on this side of the Atlantic, and I am one of them, were skeptical about whether President Sarkozy could actually get some of these sensible ideas past his Parliament. We hoped he would. We want France to be strong. He told us today he is deeply committed to carrying his mission through. But the cultural forces opposed to change seemed even stronger.

Yet it turned out his election signaled a deep sense of urgency among the French people, an urgency about their future. Sarkozy put it this way in his book, "Testimony":

I am convinced that no country in the world can get by without effort, and that France, notwithstanding its undeniable merits and prestigious past, will become a thing of the past if it doesn't take the steps necessary to adapt to the changes taking place in the world.

The French people surprised us by electing a free-market reformer. Then they surprised us again by electing a center-right Parliament that could get his ideas through. Some of those ideas, such as cutting the top tax rate, have gone through. The winds of change are clearly blowing through France.

And not just France. Over the past few years, the "Old Europe" model of

big government and bloated entitlements has shown signs of cracking. Germany elected a reformist chancellor from the Christian Democratic Party. Canadian conservatives rebounded under Stephen Harper after near extinction.

Even the Socialists are admitting their mistakes. The Socialist former Prime Minister of France, Lionel Jospin, shocked his countrymen when he blasphemously declared that: The State cannot do everything.

In Italy, center-left Italian Premier Romano Prodi announced in July he would raise Italy's retirement age from 57 to 61. Much of Europe, it seems, is trying to steer itself away from an economic model that has left it with double-digit unemployment and anemic growth. After scoffing at the Reagan Revolution two decades ago, many of them are now taking our 40th President's economic principles to heart.

Meanwhile, in the United States, the new Democratic Congress has turned away from the ideas that righted our own economic ship after the crisis of the 1970s. They are proposing higher taxes on everything from the size of our houses to the gas we put in our cars. They are handing out favors to big labor by proposing to end the secret ballot union elections and by working to defund the Federal office that was created to shine a light on how unions spend members' dues.

The Democratic Presidential candidates are practically tripping over each other to propose newer, bigger entitlements to anybody in Iowa or New Hampshire who will listen. In short, some Democrats in Congress and out on the campaign trail would like to turn America into France, when even the French themselves are obviously having second thoughts.

The effects of the Socialist model in France and other Western European countries are perfectly clear. President Sarkozy recently assumed control of a government that consumes more than 50 percent of France's gross national product. In Germany and in Italy, the percentage of GDP spent by the Government is above 45 percent. Compare that to about 30 percent in the United States. As one economist recently put it:

Europe's economy is so bad because government is so big.

So we congratulate President Sarkozy on his recent victory and his courage in attempting to restore France's economic vitality. America welcomes him. We are hopeful he will help lead the people of France into a new era of prosperity and economic freedom and strengthen the noble tradition of our two countries serving together for freedom.

I urge my Democratic colleagues to heed his message.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HARKIN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the conference report to accompany H.R. 3043, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 3043) making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes, having met, have agreed that the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate and do the same with an amendment and the Senate agree to the same, signed by a majority of the conferees on the part of both Houses.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of November 5, 2007.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, as I understand the order, we now have 1 hour; is that correct? Am I correct we have 1 hour divided up in 15-minute blocks?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator would be advised there is a total of 3 hours, of which the Senator controls 15 minutes.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I yield myself my 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I urge all Senators to support the Labor-Health and Human Services appropriations conference report. The Senate version of this bill passed, as we all know, a couple weeks ago. We had 75 votes in favor of it. We would have had 80 votes if all Senators had been here. So it was a strong bipartisan endorsement of a bill that reflected priorities on both sides of the aisle.

I am here today to say I am pleased the conference report we are considering is even stronger than the bill the Senate approved 2 weeks ago. Much has been added to the bill. I thought what I might do, for the benefit of other Senators, is sort of run through the priorities in this bill and what our appropriations bill does compared to the President's budget. I think it will give everyone a good idea of how strong this bill is, why we garnered so much support in the first place and why I hope we will garner even more support with the conference report.

Right now, the conference report invests about \$8.2 billion more than last year in education, health, and labor programs. The President's budget cut \$3.5 billion—cut \$3.5 billion—from these

programs. I will run through those now, and I will give you a good idea what those are.

Let's take home energy assistance. This is the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. At a time when we have record high energy prices, the conference report boosts it by \$250 million. The President's budget cut the LIHEAP program by \$379 million. It is a clear contrast between the President's budget and where we are.

Student aid. Since this covers education, what we did is have the biggest increase ever in support for Pell grants for kids who are at the lowest rung on the economic ladder who need these grants in order to even go to college. So what we did in our bill is we boosted the maximum award to \$4,925. The President's budget limited it to \$4,550, which is far short of the amount needed to even begin to pay for higher tuition.

Strengthening the poor. Now, here again, in the conference report, we have provided \$2.4 billion in the block grants for the Social Services Block Grant Program and the Community Services Block Grant Program. These are the things that go for housing for the poor. It goes for things such as Head Start Programs, all that helps to shore up our social services system and also community systems—as I said, whether it is housing, homeless aid, things such as that for the country.

We have provided \$2.4 billion for that. The President's budget cut both of these. In fact, it cut the community services block grants to zero. They absolutely zeroed it out. Then they cut the social services block grants by about a third. So when you add them together, he cut them both by about 50 percent—at a time when we have more poor people in this country than we had in the last several years, when, again, the cost of housing is up, all the other things are up for poor people to pay. Yet he wants to cut it by 50 percent. Unconscionable. Well, we met our obligations. We put in \$2.4 billion for that.

The next one is medical research. Now, again, this Senate has been on record time and time again supporting healthy, good increases for the National Institutes of Health for the research needed for overcoming Alzheimer's and Parkinson's and for the research that is being done at the National Cancer Institute and all the basic research that is funded that goes out to all our colleges and universities and other entities around the country.

We made such great progress in breaking the genetic code. We are making such great progress in understanding a lot of the illnesses. We are on the threshold with stem cell research and others of entering into a whole new era of uncovering the causes and the therapeutic treatments and cures for a lot of these illnesses. So we are right on that threshold.

The President's budget cut the National Institutes of Health by \$279 mil-

lion—actually cut it. Our conference report has added \$1.1 billion for the National Institutes of Health. Actually, it is slightly more than what we had in the Senate when we passed the bill a couple weeks ago.

On special education, this Congress, about 40 years ago, said we were going to provide up to 40 percent of the difference in the cost of educating kids with disabilities when they were mainstreamed in our schools. We wanted to put behind us the dark history of the segregation and isolation of kids with disabilities who were taken away from their homes, taken away from their neighborhoods, and sent away across the State to schools for the deaf, schools for the blind or maybe a lot of times were not even given an education.

So about 40 years ago, this Congress decided we were going to meet our constitutional requirements and make sure kids with disabilities had equal and appropriate education. But in doing so, we were going to help the States by providing up to 40 percent of the additional costs of special education.

Well, the high mark has been about 18 percent. That was about 3 or 4 years ago, if I am not mistaken—3 or 4 years ago. Since then, we have gone backward. We are now down, under the Bush budget, to 16 percent. So we are going in the wrong direction. So what President Bush's budget did is slashed \$291 million for special education. What we have done is add \$509 million to State grants to help our beleaguered property taxpayers in New Jersey and Iowa and all across this country, to help them meet the educational needs of our kids with disabilities. So we met our obligations there. The President did not.

On Social Security, we now know people are waiting as much as 15 months to get their cases heard. There is a backlog of several hundred thousand right now. If we do not add the necessary personnel, people are not going to get it, and maybe some of them will die in the meantime. I don't know. People keep getting more and more backlogged and get frustrated by this system. They should not have to do that. People paid in all their lives to Social Security. They ought to get their cases heard in a timely manner. So what we did is we added enough to cut down on the delays. The President's budget would not do that.

On community health centers, again, the President, when he became President, said he wanted to have a community health center in every poor area in the country. I applauded loudly for that. I thought at least here is something the President and we could agree on.

Well, what does the President's budget do? There is no increase at all for community health centers, not a dime. So we put in \$225 million more to increase funding new community health centers in some of our poorer areas of

this country. So we met our obligation there, also, in terms of meeting health care needs of people who do not have anywhere else to go.

The Head Start Program, which has proven its worth clear back to the Great Society. It is one of the Great Society programs. The President's budget cut Head Start by \$100 million—cut it by \$100 million—leaving thousands of kids behind. In our conference report, we have increased it by \$153 million—not nearly what we need to meet the needs of all the kids who want to get into Head Start, but at least under our tight budget requirements, we were able to increase it substantially. So we met our obligations there in Head Start.

So these are some parts of the budget I want Senators to know about. There is a lot of other stuff, too, but these items kind of highlight the difference between where we are in this conference report and where the President's budget is.

Again, I thank Senator SPECTER for the close working relationship we have had. This has been a bipartisan effort from the beginning to right now. Again, that is why I urge all Senators to support this conference report.

Now, the President said he is going to veto it because he said our bill had too much social spending. I would like to ask him to define what he means by "social spending." The way he said it was almost like we were funding ice cream socials or something like that in this bill. Again, this is out of bounds, out of touch. It shows how isolated President Bush has become. Every additional dime we have put in goes to bedrock, essential programs and services this Congress and this President and other Presidents have always supported.

It is interesting that in the last 5, 6 years, the President has not vetoed any appropriations bills. When the Republicans were in charge, the President did not veto an appropriations bill, even though they were over what his budget requests were.

Lo and behold, the Democrats, because of the last election, now control the House and the Senate, and the President said he is going to veto every one of them, except Defense, I guess, maybe Military Construction-VA. All the other ones he is going to veto. He is going to veto the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill because it has "too much social spending." Yet he signed all the other bills before this year.

I find that more than passing strange that the President, this year, says he is going to veto it. Well, it all adds up to politics. Evidently, the President and his advisers think somehow they are going to get some kind of political gain—some kind of political gain—by vetoing our bill for Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor.

Well, I do not know what kind of calculus goes into that, but it is bad calculus. It is bad calculus if the President thinks he might make some political gain by cutting Head Start Programs or by cutting special education or by cutting funding for the National Institutes of Health because it is over his budget, it is "too much." Well, he never said that before. He never said that before to any Republican appropriations bill that passed in the last 5 years. I guess only because the Democrats are in charge he wants to veto it.

I would say to the President: This is not a Democratic bill. Yes, we may be in charge because of the election last year, but I still point out that this bill passed the Senate with 75 votes. As I said earlier, there were five missing who would have voted for it. It would have been 80 to 20. You cannot get much more bipartisan than that. It is not a Democratic bill.

Senator SPECTER and I and other people worked very hard on this bill. So I do not see where the President comes across in saying he is going to veto it. I think the President is so isolated, so out of touch that someone said: Well, this is over your budget, so you have to veto it. And he said: OK. Fine, I will do it.

Well, again, the other thing is, when the President sent down his first veto message on this bill, he said he was going to veto it because of two things. He was going to veto it because we had included a provision dealing with stem cell research, which he was opposed to and because it was over his budget.

Well, both Senator SPECTER and I agreed in the beginning—even though we both feel very strongly about overcoming the President's dictates on stopping funding for stem cell research—even though we feel strongly about that, we were willing to go halfway to meet the President. We said: OK, we will take the stem cell portion out of here. So we would like to meet you halfway. Well, what we heard from the White House was: That is not enough. It has to be all his way, all the President's way.

Well, that is not the way we do things around here. We compromise. The art of democratic rule is to make our compromises. So I figured, if we gave up on our stem cell, then he might give up a little bit on his. But that is not the way the President sees it. It has to be all his way or no way.

Again, we do not do business like that around here. As I said, we have a farm bill on the floor this year that I am also chairing, and it is not all I want, it is not all anybody wants. In the farm bill, we have to make our compromises and agreements to get the job done.

But this President is unwilling—unwilling—to compromise, unwilling to sit down with us and hammer out some kind of a reasonable compromise. So we are left with only one course of action. We have to fulfill our constitutional responsibilities as appropriators

to fund the Government, to fund that which Senators and Congresspeople think are priorities and, yes, that the administration also thinks are priorities. So our constitutional obligation is to work these things out and get the best bill we can that people agree upon. As I said, with 75 votes, you can't get much better than that. So I guess we are left with only one course of action: Pass our bill and get it to the President, and I guess he will veto it. It doesn't make sense to me. It makes no sense for the President to veto this bill. As I said, I can't figure out what he—and then to veto it without saying: Let's sit down and work and maybe we can get some agreement. That has not happened. So, again, we are left with only one course of action: Pass the bill, the conference report. I hope Senators will support it as strongly, if not more strongly, than they supported the original bill that passed in the Senate.

Finally, let me say this: Even with this conference report, we have met all of our pay-go requirements. This bill does not add a single dime to the deficit of this country—not a dime. But by cutting a little bit here and adding there to certain priorities, we were able to get a bill that we basically all agree upon. Would I have liked to have had more in NIH? You bet I would. Would I have liked to have had more in the Head Start Program? Yes, I would have. Would I have liked to have had more for special education? Yes. The President wanted less than that, so we tried to meet him halfway. Yet the President says no, he wants it all his way.

So I hope Senators will support this conference report on Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor overwhelmingly, send it to the President, and hopefully he will change his mind. Hopefully, between now and then, he will think: Well, you know, maybe I should sign it, after all. Hope springs eternal. We will just have to wait and see. If he signs it, God bless him. That is good. We will be done with it, and we will move on to next year. If he vetoes it, well, we will just have to come back and hopefully, with the 75 or 80 votes we have had for it, we will override the veto. It is just not a good way to do things, and it causes the kind of confrontation and it causes the kind of bad things happening in Washington that the people of this country want us to end. They want us to work things out and move things along. We have done it here in the Senate. We have done it in the House with Republicans and Democrats. Now it is up to the President to also sit down and negotiate in good faith.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I am pleased this afternoon to recommend the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and related agencies division of this conference report to the Senate. This is an extremely important and

time-sensitive funding measure, and I urge my colleagues to adopt it without delay as part of the Labor and Health and Human Services conference report and send it to the President to be signed into law.

I am particularly honored to be presenting this measure to the Senate on behalf of the chairman of the subcommittee, Senator TIM JOHNSON. We have worked closely throughout the entire appropriations process, and the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs provisions before the Senate today are the product of a thoroughly collaborative and a cooperative effort, but the leadership was provided by Senator JOHNSON. I appreciate Senator JOHNSON's graciousness in allowing me to offer this conference report on his behalf.

I would also like to thank the ranking member of our subcommittee, Senator HUTCHISON, for her excellent work and cooperation in developing this conference report and the chairman and ranking member of the full committee, Chairman BYRD and Senator COCHRAN, for their strong support and guidance in shepherding this legislation to the floor.

The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs conference report before the Senate today is fair, balanced, and a bipartisan piece of legislation that deserves the full support of the Senate.

The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs portion of this conference report is critically important to our Nation's military forces and to our veterans. It includes \$64.7 billion in total discretionary funding—\$3.7 billion over the President's budget request for the Department of Veterans Affairs. This level of funding includes \$37.2 billion for veterans health care, a high-water mark in the history of the Department—the largest sum of money ever appropriated for veterans health care. Indeed, it is consistent with the independent budget the veterans organizations have proposed year after year. This is the first time we could match their goal with our appropriation. We have provided \$2.6 billion more than the President requested for veterans health care and \$373 million more than the veterans service organizations sought in the independent budget. We have, in fact, gone beyond what the independent veterans organizations have suggested in their budget. This level of funding is a clear demonstration of the importance this Congress places on the health and welfare of our Nation's veterans.

The funding included in this conference report supports a myriad of programs crucial to America's veterans, including funding the veterans hospitals, clinics, and veterans centers, as well as cutting-edge research into critical areas of health care such as traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. As a result of the asymmetric combat we are witnessing in Iraq and Afghanistan, this Nation is

producing a new generation of veterans, and they have markedly different service-related injuries than were experienced in previous wars. Thankfully, more service men and women are surviving their war wounds, but many are surviving with catastrophic physical and mental injuries.

The nature of veterans health care for new veterans is changing dramatically, while the demand for short-term and long-term health care for veterans of previous wars is rapidly increasing as the veteran population ages. We have two currents rushing together: veterans of World War II and Korea who are now in their seventies and eighties requiring more care simply because of their age, and a new generation of veterans coming out of Afghanistan and Iraq, many of whom are sustaining neurological injuries such as traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder. This other stream of veterans is flooding into our system, and we have to care for all of these veterans. That is why this legislation is particularly timely and particularly important.

All of the challenges to the Department of Veterans Affairs are enormous. The conference report before the Senate today addresses those challenges. With this funding, we are providing the resources for the Department to meet the needs of both aging veterans from yesterday's wars and emerging veterans from today's conflict.

The conference report also includes critically needed funding for military construction. It provides a total of \$21.5 billion for military construction and an \$8.4 billion increase over last year's funding level, with most of the increase directed toward implementing the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Program.

I am particularly pleased that the conference report includes \$1.1 billion for the Nation's Guard and Reserve forces—a 34.5-percent increase over the President's budget request. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have placed an unprecedented demand on the Nation's Guard and Reserve Forces. Yet the President's budget slashed construction funding for several of the Guard and Reserve components. This conference report corrects that inequity. For example, it increases funding for the Army National Guard 25 percent over the President's budget request, and for the Air Guard, the conference report more than triples the President's budget request.

Military construction may not have the glamour of the Defense Department's sophisticated weapons and other programs, but it is, nevertheless, the bedrock of the Nation's military. Our troops must have sufficient funding to provide barracks, facilities for training and maintaining their equipment, and adequate housing for their families. Without the resources provided in this legislation, these crucial facilities could not be constructed. This legislation provides funding for an

impressive array of military construction projects, the vast majority of which were requested by the President. All of the major construction projects added to the President's budget by the Senate have been fully vetted, are included in the authorization bill, and are encompassed within the service's Future Years Defense Plan.

Some have complained that the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs conference report should not be coupled with the Labor and Health and Human Services conference report. I will have more to say about that later, but I would like to make the point now that these two bills complement each other in many respects, and it makes perfectly good sense to link them together.

There are more than a few crossover items between the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill and the Labor and Health and Human Services appropriations bill. These include, to name a few, the Labor Department's Veterans Employment and Training Program, which includes the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program; the Department of Education's Impact Aid Program, which assists school districts whose student population is swelled by military dependents; and the Traumatic Brain Injury Program directed by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control. There are numerous programs that provide benefits to veterans and their families that are included in the Health and Human Services program. Veterans are not simply veterans. They are members of communities. They have children. They have spouses. They require the services that are included not only in the Veterans' Administration bill but particularly their families in other legislation and other appropriations included in the Health and Human Services bill.

Something else, too, I think is important to stress, and I will do that in greater detail, these veterans as young men and women committed themselves to this country, not because they anticipated collecting veterans' benefits but because they wanted to make a difference. They wanted to ensure that—mercifully and hopefully—the next generation of Americans wouldn't have to go into combat, but beyond that, that all Americans would have a chance. It was not about ensuring elaborate tax loopholes or sophisticated financial transactions; they were fighting—and, sadly, being injured and too many dying—to give people a chance in this country, an opportunity to go to school, for children to get immunizations, and for bright, talented young people to go to college. That is why I think it is also essential that these two bills are being considered together, because if we provide for our veterans, they have earned it—and we should and we must and we will—but if we neglect the rest of the country, have we truly fulfilled and measured up

to what they served and sacrificed for? I don't think so.

The Senate has before it a comprehensive and vitally important conference report for funding both Departments, both areas—the Department of Labor and Health and Human Services, the Education Department, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs. We have the opportunity—I would argue, the obligation—to send a signal to the President of this country and to the Nation that we are not willing to play favorites among appropriations bills. Funding for health care for our veterans is clearly a priority, but it does not trump our commitment to fund health care services for all Americans or education programs or job training for those who need it, including veterans who participate in many of the Department of Labor programs.

I urge my colleagues to support this conference report in its entirety and send it to the President today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and reserve the remainder of whatever time I may have.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise as the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the conference report. I am following my chairman of his subcommittee. I hope very much that we will be able to take up this bill, which is our subcommittee, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, separately, as everyone, I believe, knows in their heart is the right thing to do.

This bill is a bill that has been agreed to. We have worked on a bipartisan basis. We very quickly came to a conclusion in the conference on the Military Construction and Veterans' Administration bill. In fact, the President said right out that he would sign the bill, even though it is almost \$4 billion more than he had requested, because he understands the urgency of both bills—Veterans' Administration and the Military Construction—and he knows that it is important to do it right away. So he said right up front that he would sign our bill. But he also said right up front that he would not sign the Labor and Health and Human Services bill. So there would be no reason—no common sense or substantive reason—to combine these two bills.

It is incomprehensible to me that the leadership in the House decided to do this. In fact, they also put the Defense appropriations bill as a part of the Labor and Health and Human Services bill, but the Democratic chairman of the Defense bill agreed with the Republican ranking member, and they were able to take the Defense bill out.

For the very same reason, we should be taking the Veterans-Military Construction bill out from under the bill the President has said he will veto. The President will sign the Defense bill and the Military Construction-Veterans

bill. Why not have this Congress come together and accomplish something? Two major parts of our Government—it happens that it is the two parts that fund our warriors who are in the field, in harm's way right now—those could be signed right away. Why not do it? I hope the Congress will come to its senses and move in a bipartisan way, swiftly, to do this very thing.

Let me talk about the bills themselves. Military construction: With the impending return of troops resulting from the current overseas rebasing effort through BRAC and the global war on terror, our service men and women are in a time of great transformation. The military construction section of our bill provides \$21 billion for construction projects to support these moves and bring our troops home. I cannot emphasize enough that we must stay on schedule. It is important that the military services receive the facilities they need to bring our troops home, where they have better training facilities, a better quality of life for themselves and their families. From operational building to many childcare centers, we have necessary facilities in the bill to do that. Servicemembers, families, and local communities across our country are counting on us.

Now, Congress set a deadline of 2011 for BRAC to be implemented. Yet we see Congress is dragging its feet in the funding requirements to implement the BRAC. We have given the Department their mandate. We must follow through with the money needed. Many of us have visited bases in Europe, Korea, and throughout the world. We know there are training constraints in many of those bases; that our service men and women are not able to stay in training. Sometimes it is a constraint in airspace. Sometimes it is an environmental problem. Sometimes it is a constraint in ground space and artillery space, so that we can be fully trained when we go into harm's way.

The reason the Department of Defense made the announcement after our Congress passed the overseas basing commission amendment to the Defense authorization bill—the reason the Department of Defense announced that 70,000 troops would be brought home from Germany and Korea is because they agreed that the training constraints would make it impossible for us to keep our troops fully trained for the combat into which they will be going. So it is important that we fund this, that we do it on a timely basis, and that we move swiftly on the military construction part of the bill.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is the other part of this unit. I know there is a concern over total discretionary spending in all of the appropriations bills. But the President has said he will sign this bill. With the money appropriated, the Department of Veterans Affairs will be able to address the needs of over 7 million veterans who count on us to provide the funds necessary for medical care, med-

ical facilities, research, extended care facilities, and even cemeteries. The appropriations increases in the bill are in areas I support.

We will always do what is necessary to take care of our veterans and their health care needs. The research of the Veterans' Administration into prosthetics, severe trauma, and traumatic brain injury is cutting edge. Increasing resources in these programs is a good investment for our Nation's veterans and our Nation's future. We are asking the VA to expand research in several areas, including post-traumatic stress syndrome, gulf war illness, prosthetics, and geriatric care. These are the types of injuries the warriors of today are sustaining. These are the warriors in the war on terror. These are the injuries we should be looking for the very best ways to treat, and also the way to rehabilitate our injured warriors with better prostheses, better artificial arms and legs, so they can have a more normal life because they have given so much for our country.

I think every Member of Congress shares the desire to fairly compensate, medically treat, and honor our veterans. The Veterans' Administration provides the health care to address the illnesses or disabilities, physical or mental, including those illnesses that might manifest themselves decades after military service, which is something we also see happening. We always have, and always will, take care of our Nation's veterans. Every veteran should know we are committed to nothing less.

Mr. President, this Congress has shown its resolve time and again to care for our men and women in uniform, as well as the more than 7 million veterans. We owe them our gratitude. We will do our part to take care of them. I ask that we work together to put our servicemembers and veterans first, to do what is best for them and our country.

Mr. President, I will make the point of order at the appropriate time to separate these two distinct bills. The Veterans-Military Construction bill and the Labor-Health and Human Services bill are separate bills. We have separate committees, and we have dealt with the two committees separately. There is no reason to put them together, particularly when the President has said he will sign the Veterans-Military Construction bill, and he will veto the Labor-Health and Human Services bill.

Why do we delay and put our military service men and women and their families and our veterans in a situation where they are in limbo? Why not pass the bill separately because the bill is ready to go? We have worked in a bipartisan way to assure that it is.

There is no common sense nor substantive reason to put these bills together. So I will leave it up to others to determine why the leadership in the House would have lumped these bills together. I will also say that I respect

the Defense Appropriations Committee chairman and ranking member for coming together on a bipartisan basis to take their bill out because that is exactly what should have happened. I hope we will do the same thing for our military veterans and our service men and women who rely on the construction projects and military construction to provide the housing, training facilities, childcare centers, and health care centers, which are necessary for them and their families to have the quality care they so richly deserve for what they are doing for our country right now.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to make the rule XXVIII point of order at this time and for Senator HARKIN to make the motion to waive, but that all debate time under the previous order be preserved.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I raise a point of order under Senate rule XXVIII, paragraph 3, that the text of the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and related agencies bill, H.R. 2642, which constitutes division B of the conference report for H.R. 3043, is new matter as it was not contained in either the House- or Senate-passed bills.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I move to waive the point of order and ask for the yeas and nays.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Who yields time?

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, is there controlled time now? I yield myself 15 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader controls 54 minutes. The Senator from Massachusetts will be using that time.

Mr. KENNEDY. I yield myself 15 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, first, I wish to express my strong appreciation to the Senator from Iowa, Mr. HARKIN, and the Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. SPECTER, for the work they have done on the Labor-HHS conference report. This appropriations bill is of enormous importance. Our national security gets attention, but so much of what makes a difference in the strength of our Nation is our investment in our people. When we talk about investment in our people, we are talking about education, we are talking about health care, we are talking

about job safety, job training programs which have been tested and tried, examined and evaluated. The Appropriations Committee has done just a splendid job in allocating resources to these priorities. They have done it in a bipartisan way.

Now as we see this whole process on appropriations moving forward, we know this will ultimately be decided this evening with a Senate vote. It will then go over to the House of Representatives and down to the White House to the President where he has indicated he is going to veto this legislation.

I wish to take a few minutes to go over this legislation so the American people and our colleagues, as we are looking at a variety of proposals that are coming at us at a furious pace in the Senate, have a very clear understanding and awareness as to exactly what this legislation is about and its importance to American families. This is family legislation, it is children's legislation, it is health care legislation. It is about our ability to compete in the future.

We hear much talk about the challenges we are facing globally, and we are facing serious challenges globally. This legislation deals with making sure American workers are going to have the kinds of skills which are necessary so they are able to compete.

Global competition is going to be a knowledge-based competition. That is why it is so important we invest in education. That is why it is so important we have a healthy population, and why it is so important we have individuals who have the skills so we can have a knowledge-based economy and be able to compete internationally. This legislation is the heart and soul of that effort in the Congress of the United States.

Again, I thank old friends and individuals who, for a long period of time, have been strongly committed to these issues on education, health, and training.

When we look over these particular items, it is important to know, since we are talking about priorities, a billion dollars—and a billion dollars is real money, that is true—we are talking about a total budget of over \$2.8 trillion. The amounts we are talking about certainly are very modest, indeed, particularly when one looks at the total scope of our budget. And particularly when one looks at what we are spending in Iraq, the amounts we are spending in this bill are basically trivial. That is why it is so discouraging, I find, that the President of the United States believes we have to effectively pay for the war in Iraq by vetoing programs that make a difference in the quality of education, health care, and training of American workers.

Let's look at these items in some detail. How can we take this President seriously when he says he will leave no child behind, when he vetoes funding for education? How can we take the

President seriously when he says he is for children's health, when he vetoes funding for children's health care? How can we take this President seriously when he announces a new food safety initiative such as he did yesterday and says he will veto funding for food safety? The President may have the wrong priorities, but in Congress, we have worked together, Democrats and Republicans, to pass responsible new investments in our schools, the health care systems, and our jobs.

Here is what is at stake if the President vetoes this important legislation, and the American people deserve to know which of their priorities will fall to the cutting room floor when he rejects this bill.

First and foremost, this bill before us today provides long overdue funding for education. Over the past few years, the White House and the Republican leadership in the Congress have neglected the urgently needed new investments for better teachers, stronger schools, and college affordability. In fact, under the Republican-controlled Congress, funding for the education of our children has actually gone down.

This chart goes back to the last time we had Democratic appropriations bills and we passed No Child Left Behind. One can see the dramatic falloff rather than an increase in commitment to children all over this country. We saw the reductions. This reflects the final results of these battles. We can see the gradual reductions in funding. The red lines are what the administration actually requested. Here is President Bush's request, a reduction of \$2.2 billion; and in 2008, a reduction of \$1.5 billion. This is the difference between a Democratic resolution and a Democratic conference report, \$3.2 billion. We are coming back in terms of increases. It provides \$3.2 billion in new funding for education compared to last year.

The core Federal education initiative for helping schoolchildren who fall behind is called the title I program. Despite all the hype from the administration about leaving no child behind, title I funding has languished since passage of that legislation. The education funding before us today changes all that. It includes the largest increase in the title I program since the No Child Left Behind Act was passed.

Again, these are the annual increases in title I, part A funding, 2003. It was going down. In 2006, it was flat, 250. And now with this proposal, there is a significant increase, \$1.85 billion, an indication of the Nation's priority of increased funding for title I.

Title I, as we all remember, goes back to 1965 when this country said we as a nation are going to make a priority the poorest children and neediest children in our society. We are going to give attention as a nation to do something about the poorest and neediest children in this country. That is what title I is all about.

We will have a chance to get into those in greater detail. We are all fa-

miliar with the challenges we are facing with school dropout and increased poverty among the neediest of children. We know money is not the answer to everything, but it is a pretty clear indication of a nation's priorities. And included in this legislation is title I funding.

Shamefully, we have seen the Pell grant stagnate as well. In the past 5 years, students and families have struggled as college costs have skyrocketed. What we have also stated as a country—there was a great debate actually going back to 1960, and was passed in 1965 in the Higher Education Act, that we as a nation say that any young person in this country who has the skill and the ability to be admitted to a college, that they will not be denied that opportunity. If they do not have financial assistance, they will have at least some assistance from a Pell grant, named after our former colleague in the Senate, Claiborne Pell. With the explosion of the cost of education, we still saw flat funding for the Pell Grant Program, and now we are seeing a gradual increase. In this particular appropriations bill, we have an increase in the Pell grant that will be effectively eliminated if this bill is vetoed.

The President should recognize that this bill finally delivers on many of the promises we made some 6 years ago. He should embrace the progress and sign the bill. Instead, the President has threatened to veto the bill and deny the help our schools so desperately need.

The President rejected this bill because it includes an increase of \$4.5 billion for education funding over what he included in his budget. He has requested \$158 billion for the war in Iraq this year—that is \$433 million today—\$158 billion for the war in Iraq. All we are talking about is a \$4.5 billion increase for education. Mr. President, \$4.5 billion for education gets a veto; \$158 billion for the war in Iraq gets his signature.

Let's look at the choices and compare the choices of American families which are reflected in the legislation before us.

This chart reflects trying to help struggling schools turn around. American families want to use these funds to help the 9,000 schools most in need of improvement, to strengthen education for all of the children in these title I schools. This represents 1 day of the war in Iraq, and the President says no.

The most important ingredient is the education of our teachers. Having good teachers, well-trained teachers, knowledgeable teachers, committed teachers who will serve in our public school system is one of the highest aspirations that we see reflected on our fellow citizens. We need to have good teachers in many of the underserved communities, and we need to provide help for those teachers. We need to give assistance to those teachers.

We have some \$3 billion for the high-quality teachers. This would hire 30,000 teachers to help reduce class size and provide high-quality induction for 100,000 new teachers. This induction is assisting and familiarizing teachers in their classroom and in their homes. It has been enormously successful in the retention of high-quality teachers, these kinds of programs being included in this legislation. It provides high-quality professional development for 200,000 more teachers. Teachers want and need to have some time for their development, and this provides that help for their professional development.

Every other industrialized nation in the world provides this kind of assistance. Teachers need this kind of support. So we are providing important assistance to them. But, oh no, the President says, no, that will be vetoed.

We have \$7 billion to help provide the high-quality early education through the Head Start Programs, which equals 16 days of failed policy in Iraq. We all know the importance of early intervention. Everyone should read "From Neurons to Neighborhoods," the great book by Jack Shonkoff, who has done such an extraordinary amount of work pulling together these three great studies from the National Institutes of Health, which shows a snapshot of the child's early development, from birth to the very earliest years, and the difference in terms of cognitive skills and also social behavior. The earlier the investment we have in these programs, the better the results are.

We are not taking the time to reflect all that, but it is so. We have demonstrated it time and time again. But that \$7 billion is going to be subject to the veto.

I wish to mention two very important areas. We are going through these areas quickly, but I wish to mention the area of health priorities. We have mentioned early education and education, but we strongly believe in the \$4.9 billion in cancer research which would fund over 6,800 grants.

We are living in the life science century, with the extraordinary progress that has been made in DNA research and sequencing of the genes. The breakthroughs we have seen are absolutely mind-boggling. Over the recent years, we have effectively doubled the NIH research and the results coming through are extraordinary. At the same time, we are now finding that instead of taking advantage of these breakthroughs, we are beginning to cut back and cut back and cut back in terms of the opportunities in the areas of cancer and cancer research.

When you talk to families across this Nation about their priorities, No. 1 in the area of health care will be in the areas of cancer research. We have 550,000 who die every year from cancer. It touches every family in America either directly or indirectly. We know the challenges we are facing now with diabetes and the challenges with obe-

sity. There is an explosion across the country in terms of diabetes.

We have \$700 million for pandemic flu, to strengthen our health defenses. We know there are a variety of different strains that have been out there, both chemical and biologics, that could be enormously dangerous falling into the hands of the wrong groups and threatening American populations in a very significant and important way. We cannot be seeing a reduction in terms of our commitments to pandemic flu.

The Centers for Disease Control. Whenever we have a problem, look at the television news over the period of the last couple of weeks, what did we see when we had the problems over in the Far East and China? It is always the CDC that takes on the responsibility to go over and try to detect and find out what is happening in these areas. This is an enormously important health agency that has enormous capability and skill in terms of its personnel and commitment. We have all these various challenges—the increased amount of asthma that has effectively doubled over the period of the last 15 years, increasing obesity, and childhood immunizations. It is interesting there is a higher percentage of children in Iraq who are getting immunized for diseases like measles than there are in the United States of America. How do we justify that? Now we are seeing a reduction in terms of childhood immunizations.

The community health centers, which are the lifeline for some 15 million low-income Americans, we are cutting back on those at a time when we are seeing increasing numbers of Americans losing their health insurance. These are all programs that are tried, tested, evaluated and all extremely effective and programs the American people support. Immunization, the challenges of research in terms of cancer and diabetes and obesity, the challenges we are facing in those areas, the importance of investing in terms of education, all of these are extremely important.

Finally, I wish to mention worker safety and health spending, which is a fraction of the Iraq cost. One week in Iraq, \$3 billion. These are the total expenditures for protecting the \$500 million in terms of OSHA. Since the passage of OSHA, we have reduced deaths in the workplace by more than half. We have increasing complexity for OSHA, because with new techniques and new toxins being used in the workplace, there are new challenges for OSHA. We need to make sure that in the United States of America we are going to have safe workplaces as well as workplaces where individuals can be demonstrating increased productivity.

We all know the challenges that mine health safety has faced, whether it has been out in Utah or West Virginia, this past year. We have \$340 million to try to ensure safety in the mines. But that is going to be vetoed. To demonstrate

this isn't out-of-control spending, we have OSHA last year and OSHA this year, which is a 2.8-percent increase over the President's request and some 12 percent in the area of mine safety. These are basic and reasonable kinds of expressions by the Congress in areas of public concern. Nonetheless, we are hearing this administration is going to veto it.

Let me also say we have seen an administration that is, over the past years, increasing the reductions in terms of training programs under the Workforce Investment Act. The Workforce Investment Act was bipartisan legislation. Senator Kassebaum, myself, and others were involved in the development and shaping of that, coordinating a variety of different job training programs. We had strong bipartisan support, and we had support from the workers and from the business community. It has made an important difference. In my State of Massachusetts, at the end of last year, we had over 92,000 jobs that are out there waiting for people to be able to take them. Yet we had more than 178,000 people who are unemployed. You would think it would make some sense to get the skills to those individuals who can work, who want to work, so they can fill those jobs, become taxpayers and productive members of our society. That is what we are talking about in terms of workforce investment. That is what happens when we have good programs such as this.

Nonetheless, we are finding out that even though this legislation restores some \$500 million to the cuts we have had these last several years, this President is now committed toward vetoing.

So these are some of the items that are front and center in terms of this appropriations bill. As I mentioned at the outset, this is an extremely important piece of legislation. It is basically about the sole well-being of our fellow citizens. It is about educating our young, ensuring the health and well-being of our fellow citizens, about ensuring we are going to be able to have the kind of skills necessary so we can have a productive, expanding economy to be able to offer the hope and opportunity that good jobs, with good wages and good benefits, means to working families. That is what this legislation is about.

The numbers that have been included represent the best judgment of Democrats and Republicans together. Compared to where we are in terms of the expenditures we have over in Iraq, all Americans, I believe, say: Why aren't we investing in Americans? Why aren't we investing in our children, in our families, in education, in health care, in training? Why aren't we doing the things which are going to make this Nation stronger in the future? Why are we going to face a veto by this President on these important priorities?

Make no mistake, it is a major mistake for this President to do so. I hope he will reconsider his position.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that during the quorum call the time in the quorum be equally divided.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I support the motion to waive rule XXVIII. If the motion to waive is defeated, the Military Construction-Veterans Affairs bill will be stricken from this conference report.

Frankly, I am a little bit tired of the political games the administration plays with the health care of our veterans. It is the President's veto threats that necessitated the combining of the Labor, HHS, and Education bill and the Military Construction-Veterans Affairs bill. The President has threatened to veto 10 of the 12 appropriations bills—10. This President is insisting that Congress strip \$22 billion for homeland security, for educating our children, for NIH, and for fighting violent crime from the 12 bills. President Bush's budget request simply did not meet the needs of a veterans population that is suffering from the pressures of war.

The number of disabled veterans, the type of injuries, and the mental health services needs produced by this horrendous Iraq war are well beyond the President's shortsighted budget request. Congress, on a bipartisan basis, recognized that the President's request for veterans programs was out of touch with reality, and we increased funding above that inadequate request by \$3.7 billion. The President's own bipartisan study found that the veterans health care system is in need of dramatic reform. Yet President Bush, our President, has not requested one thin dime, not one thin additional dime for veterans health care to implement much-needed reforms. When faced with the dire political consequences of this bad budget decision, the President, our President, President Bush, did a political dance and finally agreed to the additional spending approved by Congress

for our veterans. But—the conjunction “but”—the President insisted that Congress find \$3.7 billion of savings to pay for it in other bills.

Did the President—our President—cut his request for a 12-percent increase in foreign aid to pay for it? No.

Did the President, our President—your President, my President—did the President reduce his—the President's—request for a 10-percent increase for the Department of Defense to pay for it? Did he? No.

Did President Bush identify \$3.7 billion of savings from his meager and inadequate budget for education or the National Institutes of Health to pay for it? No.

President Bush, our President, brandishes his veto pen and refuses to participate in any attempt to correct his failed budget. Meanwhile, veterans health care, our children's education, vital health research, and other programs important to our citizens are at risk. As long as the President—our President, President Bush—as long as the President links veterans funding to his demand for cuts in other vital domestic programs, Congress has no choice—none—but to bundle these bills together.

His plan, the President's plan, to veto the Labor-HHS and Education bill, and sign the Military Construction-VA bill would force Congress to make dramatic reductions in such areas as education funding, funding for the National Institutes of Health, and funding for low-income home energy assistance.

Those decisions would be very bad decisions, and every Member of the Senate knows it or ought to know it. The Labor-HHS and Education bill passed the Senate by a vote of 75 to 19. The Military Construction-Veterans Affairs bill passed the Senate by a vote of 92 to 1.

Bundling these bills is not an effort to jam the Senate with controversial legislation. These bills were fully debated. Any Senator could have come to the floor to offer amendments to reduce funding in the bill. Any Senator who votes “no” on the motion to waive has a responsibility to come down to the floor and show down on the \$3.7 billion of cuts that Senator would propose for such programs.

This bill could be on the President's desk tomorrow. Any Senator who votes “no” on the motion to waive rule XXVIII has a responsibility to explain to veterans why that Senator refused to tell the President of the United States that he needs to sign this legislation. I urge a “yea” vote on the motion to waive rule XXVIII.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Who yields time?

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I am very proud that this afternoon we are considering a very important bill that will fund not only the important investments in health, education, and

the workforce but also historic increases in spending for our veterans and for their families.

Chairman HARKIN and Ranking Member SPECTER have put together a great Labor-HHS bill. I am very proud to support it. But this afternoon I want to take a little bit of time to speak directly to the importance of the Military Construction-Veterans Affairs portion of this package, because today it is in grave danger of being blocked by bipartisan gamesmanship.

Our servicemembers in Iraq and Afghanistan and from so many conflicts before have done absolutely everything we have asked of them. They have answered the President's call to war with the honor and sense of duty we have come to expect from our Nation's bravest men and women. They have performed under enormous pressure in the middle of a civil war. They have left loved ones behind who count on them. They continue to put their own lives on the line every single day.

Now, unfortunately here at home, this administration has not been committed to care for them when they come home. From poor conditions at VA facilities around the country to a lack of PTSD counselors, to a benefits claims backlog that keeps our veterans waiting for months and sometimes amazingly even years, this administration has failed to account for our Nation's veterans as a part of the cost of this war. It is unacceptable that servicemembers who return from fighting overseas are being forced to fight their own Government for the care and the services we have promised them.

Democrats today on this floor are working to reverse the Bush administration's failure to care for those heroes. We have produced a funding bill for our veterans that includes \$3.6 billion more than the President asked. After years of Bush Republicans cutting corners on our veterans, we have, with this bill, offered an honest assessment of what these men and women need.

This bill takes into account the extra strains that have been put on our VA system from our simultaneous wars and the new battlefield realities that are present today. It includes nearly all of the “independent budget,” a recommendation that has been compiled by our veteran service organizations. It makes investments that will improve health care and expand mental health services and allow construction for vitally needed new facilities.

It is going to mean more qualified health care workers, better prosthetics, and more accessible veterans facilities. It is going to ensure our veterans get their earned benefits, see improved conditions at VA facilities, and get better treatment for PTSD, traumatic brain injury, and catastrophic injury.

Most of all, though, this bill means that after years of neglect, our Government, the United States of America, will again honor the sacrifice of our veterans with the care they deserve.

We are also making sure our troops are ready and that they receive the training they need. That is why I was so pleased about the military construction investment this bill makes across the country and especially in my home State. My home State of Washington's military facilities play an important role in our nation's security, from Fort Lewis in Tacoma, which is training the Stryker brigades—they are at the center of the fight in Iraq—to Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane, which plays a major role in our air defense; to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, which patrols our Pacific shores.

This bill ensures they are going to get funding they need, like all of our military facilities nationwide. In Washington State, it means more than \$635 million in improvement for Washington's military installations.

One of the best things about this bill is it won such huge bipartisan support when it passed the Senate on a vote of 92 to 1—92 to 1 it passed the Senate. It does not get much better than that for a bipartisan, strongly supported piece of legislation.

Unfortunately, today Republicans seem to be willing to jeopardize all the good, critical, important matters that have been put into this bill which they said they supported, in order to play a procedural game that is designed to stop this important bill in its tracks. I think that is a shame.

Now they are going to say, and the President will echo them, that the bill before the Senate is too expensive. They will say we should have not joined the spending for veterans with spending for health care, education, and job training.

In the same breath, they are going to say this money for veterans is critically important and should be sent to the President before Sunday. Well, I agree with my 91 colleagues who supported this bill the first time we voted on it, and I agree we need to get it signed into law as soon as possible, and we can do that very easily by voting for it today, along with this package. It will go to the President by dinner-time.

Most importantly, veterans would go to sleep tonight knowing that the vital projects in this bill are on the way. But I fear that is not going to happen. Instead, now we have Republicans who are going to make a cynical political move and block this money for our veterans because we have combined it with the Labor, Health and Education spending bill.

The President objects, apparently, to combining those bills. So I guess the Republicans are going to put their allegiances behind President Bush ahead of our veterans and say "no" to a bill that almost all of those Senators supported a few short weeks ago. I think that is wrong.

The Labor, Health and Education bill is a good one. It won the support of 75 Senators a few weeks ago here on the Senate floor. We are joining the two

because both make critical investments in a broad range of urgent priorities. We need to stop playing political games with both of these bills and we need the President to sign them now. The Republicans and the President are complaining about this move today. But it is the American people and our veterans and their families, in particular, who will be hurt if this political move is made today to separate these bills. They will pay the price, those veterans and their families, for this roadblock.

Our goal is simple. We want to make up for something President Bush has failed to do while he has tried to build up our military. We want to be sure our veterans are getting the care they need.

As I told my friends before, George Washington was the one who famously observed that:

The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their country.

Today we want to reverse President Bush's failure and reaffirm this commitment. This bill keeps our military strong by honoring the sacrifices of our heroes and meeting their needs. When those men and women put on a uniform, they earn the right to a government that cares for them on their return. When we approve this bill, we will assure them they will get finally the care they need.

Veterans Day is just a few days away. I am confident every Senator on this floor will head home to acknowledge the veterans in their State, and rightfully tell them "thank you" for the tremendous service they have given to our country. I can think of no better time than this for us to forget the politics and do something positive for our veterans, for their families, and for our country.

I have listened to the other side and the President tell us time and again: We need to get the bills to the President. We need to get the appropriations bills to the President. That is what we are trying to do today, to get two of these critical bills to the President in a timely manner. I urge our colleagues to think twice about a procedural move that will not send to the President the critical funding we need for our veterans and our military facilities across this country. With one vote we can send those to the President, and by dinner tonight know we are doing our job for the country.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANDERS). The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I have mixed feelings about the conference report now before the Senate. The chairman and ranking member of the Labor, Health and Human Services Subcommittee and the Military Construction-Veterans Affairs Subcommittee

have done excellent work in crafting their respective bills. These bills represent a reasonable blending of House and Senate priorities. They support critical national priorities in medical research, veterans' care, K-12 education, and military infrastructure. But the fact these two bills have been joined into a single conference report is unfortunate. The President has stated unequivocally he will veto the Labor-Health and Human Services bill in its current form.

By attaching the Military Construction-Veterans Affairs bill, the Democratic leadership has done nothing to change his mind. The bill will still be vetoed, and the veto will probably be sustained. Through the duration of that process, we will needlessly delay the availability of critical funding for veterans' care, and for the facilities necessary to support our Armed Forces.

There is no procedural reason that the Military Construction-Veterans Affairs conference committee could not meet this evening to approve the conference agreement under their jurisdiction. The House and Senate could then approve that conference report and get it to the President's desk for signature by Veterans Day.

That would be the right thing to do. The Labor-Health and Human Services bill could also be sent to the President, and both the Congress and the President would have been allowed to argue their respective fiscal priorities. Instead, we are being compelled to go through this procedural dance that adds nothing to the debate over fiscal policy and serves only to compound Congress's abysmal failure to get appropriations bills to the President.

I am acutely aware of past failures to enact appropriations bills in a timely fashion. I was chairman of that committee, and I remember how upset and frustrated I was when the Republican leadership wouldn't call up the bills. I couldn't believe it, an abdication of very important responsibilities of the Congress, a fundamental right and responsibility of the Congress to set the appropriations priorities. No one was more frustrated with the Senate's failure to consider these bills last year. I was particularly exasperated by our inability to get what appeared to be a noncontroversial Military Construction-Veterans Affairs bill to conference. That was as inexcusable then as it is now. But past failures don't make the current failure any more acceptable to me. The President has a right to veto bills. There is no way around that. This President has strong opinions about his responsibility to be involved in holding down Federal spending, keeping the budget under control. Why are we compounding our failure to present him appropriations bills by wrapping into Labor-Health and Human Services another bill that we all agree is important and that the President has said he will sign?

This procedure does nothing to change the substance of the debate,

and it only serves to further delay the appropriations process. There may come a point when vetoes of appropriations bills require us to go back to the drawing board and rewrite some of the bills at lower spending levels. There may also come a point in that process where I believe the funding levels advocated by the President are not appropriate or sustainable in certain cases. We have the right to disagree. Somewhere along the way, I remain hopeful we will reach an accommodation that will allow for enactment of individual appropriations bills at an aggregate funding level that is lower than the amount contemplated in the budget resolution. But to get to that point, we have to send the President some appropriations bills.

It is November 7. We have failed to send a single one to his desk. I hope the Senate will support the Hutchison motion so we can put two bills on the President's desk in short order and start to demonstrate to the American people that we are responsible, that we are acting on one of our most fundamental responsibilities, the passage of appropriations bills for the operation of the Federal Government.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent that I be given 10 minutes from the majority leader's time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, we are here today at this juncture to talk about the point of order raised against combining the MILCON bill and the Health and Human Services appropriations bill. There is a large point I will try to make, which is that these bills are complementary in many real ways. Veterans, for example, do not live alone with other veterans. They have families who require education, Pell grants, Head Start funds, and all of that is within the purview of the Health and Human Services appropriations bill. Also, they are individuals, our veterans, who have earned their rights. But I don't believe they engaged in battles for this country and wore the uniform of this country to get a pension or to get a health benefit; they did it for a broader, much larger, much more noble purpose, and that was to build a decent and just America. Part of that is making sure children have immunizations, making sure children can go to good schools and disadvantaged children can enjoy health through the title I program; making sure talented young people can go to college with a Pell grant or a Stafford loan; the CDC can protect all of us

from disease, and the NIH can use their resources to research breakthroughs in medicine and health care to benefit all of us. It is that vision of a decent, humane, and just America that ultimately compelled millions of Americans to wear the uniform of this country and defend it.

So the notion that we can arbitrarily or not arbitrarily separate these bills, I don't think it accords with one of the major functions of all of us as citizens, as soldiers, as Senators—to serve the greater good—and we are doing that, I think, with these two appropriations bills.

There is another point I think which is interesting to me. These bills have passed the Senate overwhelmingly. They would, I think, if they were separated, pass overwhelmingly. But it seems to me we are now in a situation where we can't combine them because the President has said: Don't put them together because I will sign one and veto the other, which presents my colleagues in the Senate a very interesting situation: After voting for the underlying bills overwhelmingly, do they support the President's veto? I hope we can avoid that.

I think we should send these bills together to the President today. We can do that. We can expedite the funding of the VA at record levels. We can fulfill our obligations to citizens across this country in many different ways by supporting this procedural approach of combining the bills, voting for the bills, and sending them to the President.

But the premise I think is we will separate them if this point of order is sustained, and then we will see the VA bill probably signed but then have to come back and negotiate a way for a bill we all support—the Health and Human Services bill. I don't think that is the right approach. The fastest way to get this legislation, with respect to veterans, to the President is to vote against this point of order, send it to the President, he can sign it, and next week we can celebrate Veterans Day with the largest veterans appropriations bill that we have ever passed. I think that is the route we should pursue. I don't think we should allow the President to dictate the terms.

One of the interesting things about the President's approach—particularly as we have talked time and time again about Iraq—is that: Well, the Congress can't tell me how to run policy; all they can do is fund or not fund the war. Well, here we are making a very bold, very assertive statement about funding the Veterans' administration, Military Construction, and Health and Human Services. But he says: Well, you can't do that. You can't tell me that either because I will veto one and I would not accept a package, even though it is a package of funding. Again, I think we have to—and we should—assert our will, particularly when it comes to the underlying legislation that passed this body with extraordinary—extraor-

dinary margins. This would be, I think, a different debate if we had taken a bill that was popular and combined it with a bill that could not pass this body, or barely pass this body. Both of these bills have commanded I think strong support, and they should go forward and be signed by the President.

But there is another issue here, too, and it goes back to the initial point I made about there is a complementarity between these two bills, and it is a very direct and, I believe, powerful one. We have, for example, within the Health and Human Services bill, \$228 million for the Veterans Employment and Training Program. It is in the Department of Labor. But if you are a veteran and you are looking for the training you need and employment opportunities because you have served your country honorably and well—and if we don't pass that Health and Human Services bill, that money will not be there. We have in the Department of Labor \$23.6 million for the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program. In fact, I dare say, there is too little attention being paid to homeless veterans. There was a report today that one in four homeless individuals are veterans of the military. That is a shocking and shameful statistic for this country. We have in this bill one of several programs—very small, but they help veterans. That is in the labor portion of the bill; that is not in the veterans' portion of the bill. Funding for the Department of Education, \$1.26 billion to impact aid payments. Those payments are targeted to school systems that serve military installations, large populations not only of veterans, but of Active-Duty soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines. So we are saying: Great, we are going to give the veterans what they deserve, but for those veterans and Active-Duty personnel, we can't vote in this bill for \$1.26 billion in impact aid. We can't provide their children the kind of school systems in adjoining neighborhoods to military posts that we think is adequate—not only adequate but we hope excellent.

So these bills are not distinguished in some respects. They serve the veteran population and the military population, and to suggest they are totally opposed and diametric is, I think, wrong.

In the area of health care funding, we went a long way in the Veterans' Administration bill to put significant resources into the veterans health care program.

In fact, for the first time, it exceeds the independent budget which veterans organizations present to us each year, when it comes to veterans health care, the largest increase in veterans health care, the largest appropriation we have ever given.

One of the areas we asked them to look at is traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress. We understand now because of the nature of combat and conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq, there

are thousands of young men and women coming back with traumatic brain injuries. They did surveys of returning brigades of some of our Army units and estimated that perhaps 20 percent of the troops might have some indication of traumatic brain injury—slight to moderate. Over time, this is an increasingly more difficult problem for the VA system. Of course, we have asked them to treat these individuals. But in the Health Resources and Service Administration—in the other appropriations bill, we have \$9.5 million for the traumatic brain injury program.

We have billions of dollars for the National Institutes of Health, for their research, which will be extremely important if we want to understand the phenomenon of traumatic brain injury. Of course, if we don't move that bill today, this bill, along with the Veterans' Administration bill, at least temporarily we lose these funds.

So I think there is a synergy between the two bills. I think it goes back to not just the complementary programs; it goes back to what our veterans and our soldiers today are serving for—not self-aggrandizement, not a pension, or to get the benefits they have earned alone but for something bigger. Those men and women are not out there putting time in so when they get to be 40 or have 20-plus years of military service they get the pension. They are risking their lives so this country lives up to its highest ideals. If we cannot provide and pass a robust appropriations bill and get it signed by the President on Health and Human Services, we are not living up to our obligations and our ideals.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise to speak against the waiver of the point of order—the waiver being the motion from the Senator from Iowa. I agree in part and disagree in part with the acting chairman of the Military Construction-Veterans Affairs Subcommittee.

Mr. President, two bills were passed by the Senate—one for Labor-Health and Human Services and one for Military Construction-Veterans Affairs. They are two separate bills because they are very different in nature. They cover very different areas. There was nothing in the bills that was the same. They are separate subjects, and they should be passed in the regular order.

I have heard criticism on the Senate floor and also in the conference committee of the President of the United States, as if he had told Congress not to combine these bills. The President never said any such thing. The President did exactly what I would expect a President to do in his relations with Congress and its understanding of the role of our two different branches of government—executive and legislative. The fact is, Congress chose to take two separate bills and put them together.

All the President did was exactly what he should have done. He advised Congress that he was going to veto the Labor-Health and Human Services bill because it was nearly \$12 billion over his budget request. When Congress said: OK, Mr. President, we are going to combine the bill that you have notified us you are going to veto with a bill that you have notified us you will sign, which is the Military Construction-Veterans Affairs bill, the President merely said: I have said I am going to veto the Labor-Health and Human Services bill, and I am putting Congress on notice. Congress can make the decision about how it wants to send the bills forward. The President can inform Congress of what he is going to do, which I think, frankly, is an advantage in that he has told us. The worst thing would be if he didn't tell us, if he just surprised us after we had worked in good faith on these bills. But he is not surprising us. He is telling us this is what he is going to do, and if we decide to play a game by putting two bills together, when he has told us he is going to veto one of them, the consequence will be that both bills are vetoed instead of just one.

Let's not put the President in this debate. The President is doing exactly what he should do. The Congress should do what is right. Congress knows the funding for military construction and the veterans is crucial, that there are new things in this bill that are not currently able to be funded. And the sooner we get this bill to the President, the sooner he can sign it, and we can provide these new priorities.

Where I agree with my distinguished acting chairman of the committee is that the bill is a good bill. We have come together in a very bipartisan way. We have worked out our differences, and we didn't have differences on the Senate side. We worked together on a very solid bill. We worked out our differences with the House on a bipartisan basis. The President agreed with us that it is a good bill. We all recognize that some of the best parts of the bill would be lost if there were another continuing resolution for Fiscal Year 2008.

Delaying base-closing commission implementation: As a Congress, we have required the Department of Defense to complete the implementation of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission report by 2011. Every day, every week, every month that we delay the BRAC funding is going to delay that implementation process. It is very important that we give our troops who are going to be coming back from bases in Germany and Korea the housing, the health care facilities, and the childcare centers that will provide a quality of life for our military personnel and their families. We owe them that, Mr. President.

We could send this bill to the President before the end of the week and make sure they have that funding. It is

our responsibility to do it. It is our responsibility to do it in the regular order, when the regular order will give us a Presidential signature. It will also provide new research, new treatments, and added facilities for our veterans. We know our veterans are suffering from different kinds of injuries than in previous wars. We know we are saving more lives, but a higher percentage of our wounded veterans are returning home with burns, loss of limbs, traumatic brain injuries, and mental health problems. We know that. So we provide for that in this bill. We have done it in a bipartisan way. We have provided more treatment, more facilities, more emphasis, and more research on post-traumatic stress syndrome, traumatic brain injuries, better prosthetics, artificial legs and arms that are lost by the bombs being used by the insurgents. All of that is in this bill, which could go through on its own in the regular order and be signed by the President.

One of the things we have heard from our veterans month after month after month is how long it is taking them to get through the system from when they leave military service to begin receiving their benefits and even to enter into the VA health care system. It is ridiculous for them to wait months and months when we should have a seamless transition. What our bill provides is more employees to cut that backlog and give these new veterans who are coming into the system the opportunity to have a seamless transition. That is in the bill.

If we pass a CR, this year's priorities would not be in it. The bill contains funds to implement the recommendations of the Dole-Shalala Commission. The Dole-Shalala Commission is the Commission that was appointed by the President to look at the best way to improve the care and service we provide to Active Duty Military and veterans who have returned from battle. They made recommendations. They did a thorough study. These are two great Americans: Donna Shalala and Robert Dole. They came up with recommendations, and we begin to fund them in this bill.

Mr. President, why wouldn't we pass this bill as a stand-alone measure when we know it is going to be vetoed if it is combined with the Labor-Health and Human Services bill? It does not pass the smell test to combine these bills when there is no reason to. In the original House action, they combined Health and Human Services with Defense and Military Construction and Veterans. The Defense bill was separated out because the chairman and the ranking member agreed that it had no business under Labor-Health and Human Services. That bill, by agreement, was separated out. We didn't get that agreement on Military Construction. So now we are faced with having a point of order, under the newly passed rule by the Democratic majority, that says you cannot put something in a conference report that has not passed either House in that bill.

So the point of order is going to succeed. We all know it is going to succeed. Why do we play this game? It is a game that is going to affect veterans and military personnel and their quality of life. There is no reason, there is no substantive reason, and there is no logical reason.

I urge my colleagues, let's vote unanimously to separate these bills, send the MILCON and Veterans bill to the House and ask them to quickly appoint conferees. The bill is agreed to. We have hashed out the differences. We can still get this bill to the President before Veterans Day. What a great accomplishment for this Congress, what a great way to say the President and the Congress are in agreement on something. I think the American people are looking for that. We see that the ratings of Congress and the President are at an all-time low. Why not give the American people some confidence that we can accomplish something together for the good of the people? It is very easy, very clear that this is a bill the President says he will sign. Let's send it to him. There can be no logical reason not to.

I urge my colleagues to come together on a bipartisan basis and stop the game playing, especially with our veterans and our military families who are depending upon the new initiatives in this bill to be done, and we have the power to do it. Let's do our jobs.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 10 minutes as in morning business, with the time coming from the majority leader's time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEMOCRACY IN PAKISTAN

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I have come to the floor to strongly condemn General Musharraf's declaration of martial law in Pakistan, his decision to suspend that country's constitution, and his brutal suppression of freedom and democracy and human rights.

Since Saturday, General Musharraf of Pakistan has ordered the police and military to arrest thousands of lawyers, human rights activists, and political workers. At this very moment, as we dither in Washington, Musharraf's thugs—thugs—are cracking down on democracy advocates across that country. Lawyers in coats and ties are being viciously beaten in the streets and thrown into jail. One out of four lawyers in Pakistan has been arrested since Saturday—one out of every four. In Lahore, police are being given cash bonuses for beating and arresting law-

yers. Any of us who have watched television have seen the scenes of lawyers being picked up by plainclothes policemen, pushed into vans, and the plainclothes thugs beating them on the heads and backs as they pushed them into vans. This is especially sad and ironic inasmuch as the founder of Pakistan, the much revered Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was himself a lawyer trained at Lincoln's Inn in London.

Since 9/11, the United States has given General Musharraf and Pakistan more than \$10 billion in aid, supposedly to crack down on the terrorists, the Taliban, and al-Qaida in their sanctuaries in Pakistan. Instead, General Musharraf is cracking down on lawyers, political opponents, and human rights activists or anyone who dares to stand in his way of total power in Pakistan.

Pakistan's Chief Justice, Iftikhar Chaudhry, is under house arrest, and the widely admired chair of the Human Rights Commission, Asma Jahangir, with whom I have met twice when I was in Pakistan—on two of the occasions I have been in Pakistan, I met with Asma Jahangir. She is a wonderful, lovely woman fighting for human rights for people in Pakistan. Her house has been declared a "subjail" by the Government.

What crimes have these people committed? They are guilty only of speaking out against General Musharraf's claim of absolute, unchecked power.

These are truly the actions of a desperate man. Obviously, General Musharraf is worried that the supreme court would rule in favor of those opposing his latest attempt to hold on to the Presidency and to remain a general in charge of the military at the same time. This is a blatant violation of international human rights standards enshrined in Pakistan's own constitution. General Musharraf has also cracked down on the independent media, shutting down all private television channels and radio stations.

What has been the reaction from our President and Secretary of State to this brazen violation of human rights and the democratic aspirations of the Pakistani people? President Bush has said he is "deeply disturbed." He has pointedly refrained from saying anything or condemning General Musharraf's actions.

I guess what set me off today was Negroponte. Deputy Secretary of State Negroponte told Congress on Wednesday that President Pervez Musharraf is an "indispensable" ally in the U.S.-led war on terrorism. . . . I am sorry, Mr. Negroponte, Mr. Musharraf is not an indispensable ally. The Pakistani people are an indispensable ally in our fight against terrorism. What a double standard.

Look at how the administration responded when Myanmar's military regime cracked down on prodemocracy protesters in September. Oh, my gosh, we condemned them to the high heavens—rightfully so. Now here is General

Musharraf doing the same thing in Pakistan and barely a peep from this administration. And then we have Negroponte, who has shown his colors in the past by calling dictators in Latin America in the past, now coming out saying Musharraf is indispensable. What does that say to the Pakistani people? What a double standard. No wonder the United States is held in such low esteem around the world today when we have President Bush and Mr. Negroponte taking after the brutal dictators in Myanmar, but, oh, not General Musharraf.

This is a profound mistake. This is the time to stand with the Pakistani people and not with the dictator who is dismantling their democracy. This is the time for the President to announce that he is suspending all U.S. aid to Pakistan except for humanitarian assistance directly related to the health, education, and human needs of the Pakistani people.

As of yesterday, President Bush has not even placed a call to General Musharraf. He should do so immediately. He should demand that the general immediately return the country to constitutional rule, restore freedom of the press, and unconditionally release the lawyers, human rights activists, and opposition leaders who have been arrested since Saturday, and he should inform General Musharraf that the United States is suspending all assistance to Pakistan, except for humanitarian aid, until such action is taken.

The world's greatest democracy, the United States, cannot turn a blind eye to the tragedy unfolding in Pakistan today. The time to act is now, and if the President will not act, I am prepared to work with my colleagues in Congress to suspend all assistance, except humanitarian aid, to Pakistan and to do it as soon as possible.

As I said, since 9/11, we have provided more than \$10 billion in aid to Pakistan. The overwhelming amount of this went to the military to boost its capacity to fight terrorism. But, unfortunately, the Pentagon and OMB have very little transparency or oversight of just how that money is being used or has been used.

In fiscal year 2007, Pakistan received an average of \$83 million a month at a time when Musharraf had negotiated a so-called peace arrangement with tribal leaders and was not even conducting counterterrorism operations in tribal areas. I think it is time for our GAO to look into where this money went, and I will be working with my colleagues on the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee to ensure that Congress is provided an accounting of all these expenditures. There are too many rumors, too many stories being told around Pakistan that a lot of this money has found its way into the pockets of high-ranking people surrounding General Musharraf.

Now I am told that some of our military money is being spent by Pakistan

on Harpoon missiles. These are anti-ship missiles used in naval warfare. Why in the world do they need these missiles? Is al-Qaida operating major surface warships? Hardly.

While this administration and Mr. Negroponte say that Musharraf has been a partner in the war on terror, the evidence is different.

Recently, Musharraf entered into a peace agreement with Baitullah Mehsud, a well-known Taliban supporter and sympathizer who operates in south Waziristan. This is the tribal area bordering Afghanistan where it is thought that maybe Osama bin Laden is hiding out. General Musharraf agreed to withdraw all Pakistani troops from the area and release 25 Taliban militants.

Additionally, Mr. Mehsud would not even agree to stop dispatching fighters to Afghanistan, where suicide bombings against American and NATO forces have dramatically increased this year. Just yesterday, there was a horrific Taliban bombing in northern Afghanistan, with dozens of people killed, including at least six members of the Afghan Parliament.

I ask: Why is General Musharraf making deals with the sponsor of attacks such as this? Is General Musharraf helping or hurting our fight against militant Islamic extremists in Pakistan? He makes an agreement with a known Taliban supporter, but he won't make any agreements with lawyers and human rights activists in Pakistan.

It is time for the Bush administration to make our efforts in Pakistan more effective. We need a real partner in this fight, not General Musharraf. He has severely undercut his ability to effectively fight terrorism. It is time to understand that only a government that is supported by its people will actually have the ability to crack down on extremists who seek to hurt and harm American interests.

The people of Pakistan have spoken out. They do not want Musharraf, but he is not listening. He is a dictator, and he is going to stay there, and he is going to trash the Constitution, he is going to jail lawyers and human rights activists and members of the supreme court.

Just remember, Musharraf came to power in a coup d'etat in 1999, ousting the democratically elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. He assumed the title of chief executive. Later, he assumed the office of President of Pakistan, all the while remaining commander in chief of the military. Now he is seizing absolute power.

I have come to the floor many times in the last 13 years to speak about America's relationship with Pakistan, to praise Pakistan and the Pakistani people as a steadfast ally going back for more than half a century. I have been to Pakistan many times. Make no mistake, I am a friend of the people of Pakistan. I admire them greatly. They have been great, strong friends of the

United States for over 50 years. In the fight against communism and in every war we have ever conducted, they have helped us out. But at this time, I must speak out about the grave injustices being inflicted on the Pakistani people by General Musharraf in his grab for absolute power.

In the months and years ahead, the people of Pakistan will be asking: Who stood with us against General Musharraf's attempt to destroy democracy and seize absolute power? That is why it is so important that we in Congress, and the President as well, make it clear that we stand with the Pakistani people and Pakistani democracy and the rule of law and we reject Musharraf's power grab.

ROBERT H. CLAMPITT FOUNDATION CHILDREN'S PRESSLINE

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I rise to speak about a provision in this bill that I sponsored. With funding in this conference report designated in the fund for the improvement of education, the Robert H. Clampitt Foundation's Children's PressLine will establish a New Orleans bureau to teach journalism skills to at-risk youth in New Orleans.

Using an oral journalism methodology created 31 years ago by its predecessor, Children's Express, New York City-based Children's PressLine, CPL, has a proven model of civic engagement and issues awareness by youth that facilitates the participation of children of all ages and literacy levels. Every year, CPL enables more than 75 children and teens to be trained quickly and easily, empowering them with real-world critical thinking, learning and writing skills outside of the constraints of a traditional classroom environment. This CPL model has a proven track record for creating an engaging program that teaches critical professional skills and media literacy in a format that invests children in the lasting journalism that they produce.

This funding would provide for CPL personnel to work with local education and community leaders to establish a New Orleans bureau, implementing the CPL model for youth training and development. In the spirit of CPL's acclaimed "In Search of Faith" project following 9/11, the bureau's youth reporters would apply their skills to creating an oral history of children's experiences recovering from Hurricane Katrina. As CPL content is syndicated nationally through the Scripps Howard News Service and through online news sites including PBS OnlineNewsHour, the program would also create a national forum for children's voices to be heard.

By sharing their poststorm experiences with a national audience, these children will both process their traumatic experiences in a creative way, while also developing important writing skills that will bolster their academic achievement. These types of creative programs are critical for children's development, particularly after

a traumatic experience, and we are excited that CPL will now have the resources necessary to build a New Orleans bureau and work with children who will benefit greatly from the program.

Mr. HARKIN. Thank you to the senior Senator from Louisiana for speaking so eloquently about the benefit that her State will get from funding in this bill. I understand there has been some confusion about the intent of this funding. I want to assure my friend from Louisiana that I will communicate to the Department of Education that the intent of this funding is to help children in New Orleans.

Mr. SPECTER. I will join the chairman in his efforts to clarify this provision.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Thank you to the chairman and ranking member for their efforts.

Mr. MCCAIN. President, I wish to discuss the appropriations package before this Chamber today. We find ourselves, once again, dealing with the bulk of our Nation's spending bills at the end of the year, behind schedule, devoid of the careful consideration these important measures warrant. It is distressing that year after year, the Congress fails to produce legislation on time and free of unrequested, unauthorized, and wasteful spending. It is unfortunate that this year is no different.

In hopes of avoiding a veto from the President on a bloated Labor, Health and Human Services appropriations bill, the majority has decided to lump the bill together with the popular Military Construction-Veterans Administration appropriations bill. Instead of allowing this body to consider each bill on its own merits through robust and transparent debate, the majority and its members of the appropriations committees have attempted to shield their wasteful ways with the treatment and well-being of our servicemen, women, and veterans covered under the MilCon-VA bill. Not only is this an unconscionable tactic, it also is a violation of Senate rules, specifically rule XXVIII and represents the continued devolution of our annual budgeting process. I am confident that there will be enough collective wisdom mustered today to uphold the Senate rules and send this conference report back to the House.

Let us address briefly the reasoning behind the President's threatened veto of the underlying bill. The Labor-HHS bill currently stands \$9.8 billion above the President's request, and \$841 million over the Senate-passed level. Not only is this an unacceptable inflation of the original funding request, but it also highlights the egregious practice of earmarking funds. During conference, behind closed doors, there were at least 117 earmarks added to the Labor-HHS portion of the bill, and an additional 109 earmarks inserted into the MilCon-VA portion. Overall, the package before us today contains an eye-popping total of nearly 2,200 earmarks. I am ashamed of this graphic

display of waste. It is disconcerting that in this time of necessity for our men and women returning from service overseas, lawmakers have attempted to hijack a bill vital to ensuring their proper care and treatment.

As usual, the majority of earmarked funds in this bill will go to the States represented by members who serve on the appropriations committee. I have long stressed the necessity of reforming the excessive and irresponsible ways of earmarking, and the state of the bill before us today only reinforces that need. And to think, less than months ago, most Members heralded the enactment of the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007, believing it would change business as usual. Well, it hasn't.

Allow me to take a moment to highlight a few earmarks of particular note: \$350,000 to study the relationship between residential floor coverings and distributive patterns of airborne particulates in Smyrna, GA; \$320,000 for the American Jazz Museum, Kansas City, MO; \$400,000 for a study of the feasibility of establishing a graduate school in the medical sciences at Radford University in Radford, VA; \$130,000 for the First Ladies Museum in Canton, OH; \$325,000 for the South Florida Science Museum, West Palm Beach, FL; \$150,000 for the Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa in Des Moines, IA; \$150,000 for the American Ballet Theatre in New York, NY; \$1.42 million for the virtual colonoscopy outreach program at Marshall University in West Virginia; \$100,000 for the Kansas Regional Prisons Museum; \$250,000 for exhibit preparation at the James K. Polk Presidential Hall TN; \$75,000 for the Monterey Bay Aquarium in California; \$211,900 for exhibit preparation at Utah Art and History Museum.

While some in this body may feel that it is in our vital national interest to spend \$350,000 of the American taxpayers' money to study the spread of dust on residential floor coverings, I simply disagree. The above-mentioned projects are only a small snapshot of the many, many other wasteful items tucked away in the 853 pages of this bill.

Our Nation remains at war, and as a result we continue to see our brave service men and women in uniform returning home in need of comprehensive and effective care from our VA system. It is our responsibility as Members of Congress to address the needs of those who have borne so valiantly the sacrifices of armed conflict by providing our VA system with the resources needed to accomplish its mission. The President has stated publicly his intention to sign a clean version of the MilCon-VA bill when it reaches his desk. However, rather than addressing the needs of our veterans in a timely fashion, the majority has chosen to unnecessarily delay passage of this vital bill. The American taxpayer expects more of us, as do our brave service men and women who are fighting abroad on

our behalf. We must stop these Washington games and return to placing our Nation's interests before our own.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I wish to address the pending legislation, the conference report for the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Fiscal Year 2008 appropriations legislation, which has been combined with the Fiscal Year 2008 Military Construction VA appropriations legislation.

I encourage my colleagues to cut right to the chase. Packaging these bills together is an effort to force President Bush to sign the Labor-HHS appropriations bill, which he opposes and will veto, by combining it with a Military Construction Veterans funding bill that cleared the Senate with almost unanimous consent. We ought to be working to write funding bills that are acceptable on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue and debating these conference reports separately. Instead what we are seeing is 2008 election year politicking at work.

I voted against the Labor-HHS appropriations bill on the floor because of the overall spending level, which was roughly \$9 billion over the administration's request. Now I understand that this portion of the conference report grew by an additional \$840 million beyond what the Senate passed. The level of spending in this title of the conference report is excessive and will add to the huge financial burden we are leaving for our children and grandchildren. So while this legislation is well intentioned, I cannot support it. Nine billion dollars may not seem like much money in the context of a budget that totals more than \$2 trillion. But the cumulative effect of excessive spending will total in the tens of billions in any given year unless we act to maintain some form of fiscal discipline. Some of the additional spending, particularly related to education, I support—but the vote being cast today is in relation to the entire \$151 billion discretionary package, which on the whole I do not believe should be approved.

The military—veterans title of this package first passed the Senate by a vote of 92 to 1. I supported this bill on the floor, which was \$4 billion over the administration's request, because I agree with the vast majority of the policies and support the increased commitment to our Nation's veterans during a time of war. I fully support this portion of the conference report—and my understanding is that if the Congress presented this title to the administration as a free-standing bill, the President would sign the legislation. So what we are seeing on the floor of the Senate here today is the majority party's willingness to use whatever means necessary to get their way on excessive domestic spending—even if it means stalling a bill that would provide immediate resources to our Nation's veterans. Rather than working for the best interests of our veterans, they are being used for political the-

ater. That, to me, is shockingly bad judgment.

I understand that a point of order lies against this package for violating Senate rule XXVIII, and that it will be raised this afternoon. I will vote to sustain the point of order because the end result could be President Bush receiving the Labor-HHS title and the military-veterans title as free-standing packages. Thus the military-veterans package would be signed and needed funds for our veterans will be available.

My understanding is that, for a variety of reasons, the President will veto the Labor-HHS title. The administration has been vocal about their concerns for some time, so this should not come as a surprise to my colleagues. The Senate has been on notice.

I tried to improve the Labor-HHS title during the floor debate by offering an amendment dealing with the Ryan White HIV/AIDS funding formula. My amendment was accepted by a rollcall vote of 65 to 28, but dropped during the conference process. My amendment simply ensures that the current Ryan White funding formulas would not be altered by this appropriations bill, neutering a provision in the underlying House bill that changes the formula that was unanimously agreed to in the Senate just last year. We agreed the money would follow the patients. The conference report will revert to waiting lines, while providing San Francisco a funding increase—even though they receive money in part for people who are already dead.

Last December, the House and Senate passed by a overwhelming majority authorization legislation for Ryan White. Our recent revisions to Ryan White ensured that no large city lost more than 5 percent of its formula funding from the previous fiscal year. In addition to the formula funding, cities sometimes receive additional supplemental funds to deal with severe need. To ensure more stability, we reduced that supplemental funding—from 50 percent of the total to one-third of the total appropriations—to provide additional formula funding.

The House provision I mentioned, which Senator FEINSTEIN stated on the Senate floor was a "Pelosi fix," funnels \$9.4 million away from the current Ryan White Fiscal Year 2008 formulas so that 11 cities could benefit from yet another hold harmless provision for Fiscal Year 2007. This new, retroactive hold harmless provision is added on top of the hold harmless provisions under the current Ryan White funding formulas. While some have called this a stop-loss, it is still a change to the funding formulas because it alters how the appropriations dollars would be directed to cities receiving Ryan White funds. This is a retroactive application of the stop-loss, applying to 2007 grant awards, not 2008 grant awards. Quite frankly, this earmark ensures that 11 cities arbitrarily receive additional funds for Fiscal Year 2007 at the expense of 45 other cities.

Even though my amendment was supported by a majority of Senate conferees, it was dropped in the conference negotiations. Because no amendments were allowed during the conference meeting, there was no chance for all conferees to take an up-or-down vote. Is this democracy at its best? Our constituents deserve a better, more fair process.

As I said previously during the Labor-HHS floor debate, I stand ready to work with all of my colleagues on a compromise product that can garner support from both the legislative as well as the executive branch of our Government. It is unfortunate that we have to waste yet another week on this political exercise, rather than using that time to write a quality compromise product that can actually become the law.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. McCASKILL). The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I alert my distinguished counterpart, Senator MCCONNELL, that I am going to use 4 or 5 minutes of leader time. So if he needs more time, I alert him to that fact. Our time is basically gone. I didn't know that when I came to the Chamber.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I am prepared to use a couple minutes of my leader time.

We have before us a combination of two bills—the Labor, Health and Human Services bill and the Veterans bill. We know the President will sign the Veterans bill. He has been hoping to get it for the last couple of months. We know he will veto the Labor, Health and Human Services bill. So Senator HUTCHISON from Texas has made a point of order that the Veterans bill should not have been placed into the Labor-HHS bill in conference.

The principal reason for sustaining that point of order is to separate these bills and give us a chance to get a Veterans bill to the President by Veterans Day, which is next Monday. Today is the last day the House of Representatives could appoint conferees on this bill in order to get it to the President by next Monday, Veterans Day. So the only way we can get a signed Veterans bill by Veterans Day is for the point of order to be sustained, thereby separating these two bills and giving us a chance to get the job finished for our veterans, who richly deserve this important bill, by next Monday on Veterans Day.

I urge my colleagues to vote to sustain the point of order, to give us a chance to get these bills separated and get this much needed relief to our veterans by next Monday, Veterans Day.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, the Labor, Health, and Education bill passed the Senate with 75 votes. When the bill originally passed the Senate, I applauded my Republican colleagues

for joining with us in such great numbers to support a bill of such great importance to our country's domestic well-being.

This bill makes significant investments in education, and isn't it right that we do that? It supports the No Child Left Behind programs such as title I grants. In one school district in Nevada, 315,000 students go to that school district. I have another school district in Nevada that has 88 students in it. We have 17 superintendents of schools in Nevada, but I have met with every one of the superintendents, and they believe the No Child Left Behind Act is really creating problems. Whether it is a big school district or a little one—problems. One of the big problems is the financial aspects of it are too short.

The conference report that is before the Senate will do something to magnify our ability to educate children with disabilities. That is the right thing to do. Why should the burden be left with local school districts? That money is taken from programs that enrich schools and is used to take care of a Federal mandate—educating these children. I support educating those with disabilities—physical, emotional, mental disabilities. They should be educated. But we required the States to do that. We should step forward. We have not done that. This bill conference report does that.

This legislation helps families pay for college with Pell grants and other aids. It is important that is done.

This legislation supports our economy and the well-being of our workforce with job-training programs for adults, young people, and dislocated workers, and supports funding for the Mine Safety and Health Administration and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

For health care, it makes critical investments, including local health care centers like community health care centers, to improve access to care and train nurses and other health care professionals.

I can remember as a young Senator, Senator Moynihan was back there. He sat right back there. We were debating, at the time, one of the problems of the day—homelessness. Senator Moynihan said to me—he said it as a professor would tell a student—he said that one of the big problems with homelessness is we haven't lived up to our obligation as a Congress. When we emptied the mental institutions around the country, one of the obligations we had was to have community health centers so these people could go back and have their medicine readjusted. He said we have not done that. Very few community health centers exist, and this is the reason we have so many homeless. This legislation doesn't cure it, but it helps, it helps with community health centers.

In this legislation, crafted by Senators HARKIN and SPETER, there are new funds for medical research to

study diseases such as diabetes, cancer, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's.

I had a conversation with J.C. Watts yesterday. He is retired from Congress but an All-American quarterback from Oklahoma, a great athlete. He said: Have you seen David Humm lately? I said: No, I haven't. David Humm was an All-American from Nebraska, and, of course, J.C. Watts knew of him and knew him. I told him: You wouldn't know David Humm. Handsome—he should have been a model. He played college football. He played professional football for 10 years. But he was stricken with multiple sclerosis. David Humm is very sick now.

You think of people like David Humm when you recognize that we need to do medical research. This legislation increases funding for diseases such as multiple sclerosis. It gives the National Institutes of Health resources to do things in medical research that they cannot do unless they get money.

Right now, people who want to do medical research are stymied. They know they make these applications to the National Institutes of Health, and if they are lucky, one out of every five grants will be funded, so a lot of people don't bother to even apply anymore because their chances are so remote that they are going to be able to do their medical research. This bill will help.

This legislation fights poverty with community service block grants and social service block grants. It adds money to programs such as Head Start to keep kids healthy and start them on a path to good education and helps families cope with ever-rising energy prices.

It does it all. It works in tandem with the VA portion to support America's veterans with funds for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. There is money in this to support the Department of Labor's veterans employment and training programs to help returning troops.

There are additional moneys for emergency and hospital care, rehabilitation, education, and long-term support for Americans with traumatic brain injuries.

It is a good partner with the bill that is part of this conference report, the veterans aspect of this. In the Labor-HHS bill, there is care for homeless veterans, who comprise an outrageous 23 percent of America's homeless population. If you see a homeless person on the street, you can bet, No. 1, there is a 25-percent chance that person is a veteran. What a shame.

The priorities I talked about here are not Democratic or Republican priorities; they are American priorities. We all want to keep our economy strong and growing, we all want to provide our children with keys to unlock a future of limitless opportunity, and we all want to give every American a chance to share in the blessings of our country. The bill now before us reflects those ideals in a responsible way. Yet President Bush has threatened another veto.

Remember, “veto” is a new part of his vocabulary. He has been President for 7 years, and that is just something new he has picked up. In fact, he has threatened to veto all 12 appropriations bills before they were even written. He has already vetoed children’s health insurance and is threatening to veto the farm bill, which is bipartisan legislation that both sides of the aisle have worked hard to write. In the 7 years of his Presidency, after having rung up record deficits and debt with his tax and spending policies that were rubberstamped by a Republican-dominated Congress, President Bush has suddenly decided to act as if he has newfound fiscal discipline.

Given his fiscal record, everyone should understand the President’s latest stand is driven by partisan politics rather than a desire to pursue proper fiscal policy. I understand that. I am sure many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle understand that. We all do understand it, but it is irresponsible. His failed Presidency has left him with little else to become relevant. But he should not attempt to score political points on the backs of our veterans who have given so much to our country and received so little in return.

We have, in this conference report, \$4 billion more than he asked for. Why? Because it is needed. The President should not attempt to score political points on the backs of working families who are struggling mightily after 7 years of his failed economic policy. Gas prices in Nevada are way over \$3 a gallon now, and they say they will arrive at \$4 a gallon. The President should not attempt to score political points on the backs of children in need of a good education, those who are ill and in need of a cure and those who are homeless in need of a place to sleep.

He should not, and we must not let him, and we have that right here. We have the ability, and we have that obligation when we vote on this later today.

Some Republicans are seeking to separate the two bills—to force a vote just on the VA bill and vote just on the Labor-HHS bill. If we do that, here is what happens. This bill will go back to the House with only the Labor-HHS bill. That is all the President will get. He will not get the veterans bill. At some time he will get it, but he could have it today. Remember, one bill we passed by 92, the other one by 75. Why would people change their votes? They agreed on these two bills. We have not changed the amount of them.

So I hope we can do both of these bills. With the same bipartisan support that has brought this bill to the floor, we can pass it and send it to the President. We can get aid to veterans before Veterans Day. We can start investing in America’s domestic priorities right away.

We must not dance around the reality of the situation. President Bush wants these bills separated so that he

can pressure us to make even deeper cuts in education, health care, and homeland security. Why do you think increases were made in the Labor-HHS bill? To help the American people as we see it. We are an equal branch of Government.

The President and some of his allies here in the Senate are sure to recycle their well-worn language that we are holding up funding for veterans. That is false. It is untrue. We stand ready to pass this bill today. We stand ready to make right the awful conditions many veterans face as a result of this administration’s neglect. We will not take from Peter to pay Paul. We need not make that choice.

Mr. President, 92 Senators who voted for the VA bill believe it sets the right priorities for America. I do too. Clearly, the 75 Senators who voted for the Labor-HHS bill believe it, that it sets the right priorities for America.

What we have before us now are the same priorities. They have not changed. I urge my colleagues to do the right thing.

We are the legislative branch of Government. The Founding Fathers, in setting up this wonderful country with our Constitution, made three separate and equal branches of Government. We, the Congress, do not serve under the President; we serve with the President.

Why in the world would Senators who voted 75 in number now suddenly vote against the bill for which they voted? That is what they are doing. Why wouldn’t we just send this whole piece of legislation to the President? Seventy-five Senators voted for one part of it; 92 Senators voted for the other.

Be the legislative branch of Government; that is who we are. Don’t kowtow to the President. We did what we thought was right, and it is unfair for him now to tell us how we should legislate.

I ask that Senators vote the way they did the first time around: 92 supported the VA bill; 75 supported the Labor-HHS bill. They are both badly needed for this country.

Madam President, if we have remaining time, I yield it back.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I yield back our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The question is on agreeing to the motion to waive the point of order. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN), the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD), and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. LOTT. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. BROWNBACK), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. BUNNING), and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN)

and the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. BUNNING) would have voted “nay.”

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 47, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 404 Leg.]

YEAS—47

Akaka	Harkin	Murray
Baucus	Inouye	Nelson (FL)
Bayh	Johnson	Nelson (NE)
Bingaman	Kennedy	Pryor
Boxer	Kerry	Reed
Brown	Klobuchar	Reid
Byrd	Kohl	Rockefeller
Cantwell	Landrieu	Salazar
Cardin	Lautenberg	Sanders
Carper	Leahy	Schumer
Casey	Levin	Stabenow
Conrad	Lieberman	Tester
Dorgan	Lincoln	Webb
Durbin	McCaskill	Whitehouse
Feingold	Menendez	Wyden
Feinstein	Mikulski	

NAYS—46

Alexander	Dole	McConnell
Allard	Domenici	Murkowski
Barrasso	Ensign	Roberts
Bennett	Enzi	Sessions
Bond	Graham	Shelby
Burr	Grassley	Smith
Chambliss	Gregg	Snowe
Coburn	Hagel	Specter
Cochran	Hatch	Stevens
Coleman	Hutchison	Sununu
Collins	Inhofe	Thune
Corker	Isakson	Vitter
Cornyn	Kyl	Voinovich
Craig	Lott	Warner
Crapo	Lugar	
DeMint	Martinez	

NOT VOTING—7

Biden	Clinton	Obama
Brownback	Dodd	
Bunning	McCain	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 47, the nays are 46. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The point of order is sustained and the language that is the subject of the point of order is stricken.

The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, I am not going to exercise my privileges under the unanimous consent request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the rule, the Senate now considers the question of whether the Senate should recede from its amendment to the House bill and concur with a further amendment.

Mr. CONRAD. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN), the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD), and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. LOTT. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator

from Kansas (Mr. BROWNBACK), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. BUNNING), and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. BUNNING) would have voted "nay."

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SALAZAR). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 56, nays 37, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 405 Leg.]

YEAS—56

Akaka	Feinstein	Nelson (NE)
Baucus	Harkin	Pryor
Bayh	Inouye	Reed
Bingaman	Johnson	Reid
Boxer	Kennedy	Rockefeller
Brown	Kerry	Salazar
Byrd	Klobuchar	Sanders
Cantwell	Kohl	Schumer
Cardin	Landrieu	Smith
Carper	Lautenberg	Snowe
Casey	Leahy	Specter
Cochran	Levin	Stabenow
Coleman	Lieberman	Stevens
Collins	Lincoln	Tester
Conrad	Lugar	Voinovich
Craig	Menendez	Webb
Dorgan	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murray	Wyden
Feingold	Nelson (FL)	

NAYS—37

Alexander	Domenici	Martinez
Allard	Ensign	McCaskill
Barrasso	Enzi	McConnell
Bennett	Graham	Murkowski
Bond	Grassley	Roberts
Burr	Gregg	Sessions
Chambliss	Hagel	Shelby
Coburn	Hatch	Sununu
Corker	Hutchison	Thune
Cornyn	Inhofe	Vitter
Crapo	Isakson	Warner
DeMint	Kyl	
Dole	Lott	

NOT VOTING—7

Biden	Clinton	Obama
Brownback	Dodd	
Bunning	McCain	

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. BROWN. I move to reconsider the vote and to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

**UNANIMOUS-CONSENT
AGREEMENT—H.R. 1495**

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that on Wednesday, November 7, when the President's veto message on H.R. 1495 is received, it be considered as having been read, spread in full in the Journal, and printed in the RECORD; that there then be 3 hours of debate on the message with the time divided as follows: 45 minutes each for Senators BOXER and INHOFE, 90 minutes under the control of the Republican leader or his designee; that upon the use or yielding back of time today, the message be set aside to occur following morning business tomorrow morning, Thursday, November 8, at which time there be a total of 30 minutes remaining for debate, with 7½ minutes each for Senators BOXER and INHOFE and 15 minutes for the Republican leader or

his designee; that upon the use or yielding back of time, with no further intervening action, the Senate proceed to vote passage of the bill, the objections of the President notwithstanding.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I come to the floor to urge my colleagues to override the President's veto of this important bill. There are many colleagues who want to speak tonight on the subject of WRDA, because this has been a team effort. Senator BOXER, the chairman of the committee, along with Senator INHOFE, ranking member, have worked hard and diligently to put a bill together which the vast majority of us support, and many colleagues are here tonight to speak. I will be very brief.

I want to speak about this bill because it is so critical to Louisiana. It is critical for us to give a green light to the people of south Louisiana and to the gulf coast who are still struggling to rebuild and put the pieces of their shattered lives back together because of the unprecedented two-punch storm—Katrina and Rita—and the breaking of the Federal levee system that should have held but didn't. We saw 285,000 homes destroyed. Because of the fires in California, as horrific as they were, screaming out of the mountains with the Santa Ana winds and scorching homes and neighborhoods, 1,600 homes were lost. Thousands of families were displaced and some businesses destroyed. But compared to Katrina and Rita, which is now 2 years in the past but is very close in the memory and hearts of the people still living there, we have to continue to remind ourselves and the Nation, it was 285,000 homes destroyed, unprecedented in the history of this Nation.

This bill in place lays a foundation for us to build on. It lays a foundation for security and prosperity. Frankly, without it, our long-term recovery is in jeopardy. This bill will authorize, not fund, about \$7 billion in critical water infrastructure projects, the first real piece of Louisiana coastal restoration effort, the closing of a shipping channel that was literally devastating to the parish in which it lies, St. Bernard Parish. Every home was destroyed in that parish; 67,000 people who lived there saw their lives and businesses destroyed when the levees supporting this commercial channel failed. There were levees throughout the metropolitan area that failed. This bill begins to lay a foundation for coastal restoration, to restore levees, to close the Mississippi Gulf outlet channel we refer to as Mr. Go, establishing for the first time hurricane protection along some southern parishes, Lafourche and Terrebonne, which we don't hear very much about because everybody focuses on New Orleans. We don't hear about Lafourche and Terrebonne and Iberia and Cameron. These are parishes that have hundreds of thousands of people

who live there and support the commerce of this Nation disproportionate to their number. This is where the pipelines are. This is where much of the energy infrastructure is for the Nation. It is these places we want to preserve for the future.

That is why Senator INHOFE and Senator BOXER and the members of their committee—Senator VITTER represents us on this authorizing committee—have done an outstanding job in pulling together these projects. I don't know why the President chose this bill to try to reassume the mantle of fiscal responsibility, but he picked the wrong bill. As my colleagues will explain, it is fiscally responsible to pass a framework, a guideline, a limit on these projects. That is what WRDA does.

For the Nation it is important we invest in critical infrastructure. I don't like to make these comparisons on everything, but it is worth noting that we are now spending \$120 billion this year in Iraq. We are spending \$2.3 billion a week. It is hard for me to go home to Louisiana and explain why we can't come up with \$7 billion in authorizations for projects that are going to last over the next 20 or 30 years. We still have to go back and get the funding, but without authorization, we can't get started.

I hope my colleagues will join me in a strong override. The House did so last night. I look forward to the Senate overriding the President's veto of this important bill.

I retain the remainder of my time.

**WATER RESOURCES
DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2007—VETO**

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair lays before the Senate the President's veto message on H.R. 1495, which under the previous order is considered read and spread in full upon the Journal.

The message from the President to the House of Representatives is as follows:

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 1495, the "Water Resources Development Act of 2007."

This bill lacks fiscal discipline. I fully support funding for water resources projects that will yield high economic and environmental returns to the Nation and each year my budget has proposed reasonable and responsible funding, including \$4.9 billion for 2008, to support the Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) main missions. However, this authorization bill makes promises to local communities that the Congress does not have a track record of keeping. The House of Representatives took a \$15 billion bill into negotiations with a \$14 billion bill from the Senate and instead of splitting the difference, emerged with a Washington compromise that costs over \$23 billion. This is not fiscally responsible, particularly when local communities have